

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1146

INFO AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, U.K. (N.I.)

SUBJECT: ULSTER CONVENTION REPORT TO BE PRESENTED TO PARLIAMENT

REF: BELFAST 9

1. SECRETARY OF STATE FOR NORTHERN IRELAND MERLYN REES IS SCHEDULED TO PRESENT NORTHERN IRELAND CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION REPORT TO COMMONS JAN 12. IT IS EXPECTED REES WILL ALSO REPORT CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS FOR TREATMENT OF REPORT. REPORT IT RECALLED IS BODY OF RECOMMENDATIONS OF MAJORITY UNITED ULSTER UNIONIST COALITION (UUUC) MEMBERS OF CONVENTION AND CONTAINS PROPOSALS FOR LOCAL EXECUTIVE WITH SIGNIFICANT DEVOLVED POWERS TO BE SELECTED FROM LOCAL PARLIAMENTARY MAJORITY AND PARTICIPATION IN ADMINISTRATION OF MINORITY PARTIES TO BE ESTABLISHED THROUGH MEMBERSHIP IN COMMITTEES RATHER THAN IN CABINET.

2. IT CONSENSUS OBSERVERS IN NORTHERN IRELAND THAT PARLIAMENT, AND CABINET, WILL NOT ACCEPT AND ADOPT CONVENTION REPORT SINCE IT DOES NOT FULFILL CRITERION OF ACHIEVING WIDESPREAD ACCEPTANCE. LARGELY CATHOLIC SOCIAL DEMOCRATIC AND LABOUR PARTY (SDLP) OPPOSES MAJORITY RECOMMENDATIONS AS DO ALLIANCE PARTY, UNIONIST

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PARTY NORTHERN IRELAND AND NORTHERN IRELAND LABOUR PARTY. IT

ALSO CONSENSUS THAT GOVERNMENT WILL ATTEMPT SOFTEN REJECTION OF REPORT AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE TO LIMIT LOYALIST OUTRAGE.

3. SPECULATION ABOUT GOVERNMENT/PARLIAMENT ALTERNATIVES CENTERS AROUND THREE POSSIBLE COURSES OF ACTION: (A) REJECTION OF CONTROVERSIAL PORTIONS OF CONVENTION REPORT AND REFERRAL OF THESE PORTIONS FOR RECONSIDERATION BY A RECONVENED CONVENTION, (B) CALLING FOR A NORTHERN IRELAND REFERENDUM ON THE CONVENTION REPORT, (C) PUTTING THE REPORT IN ABEYANCE AND ESTABLISHING AN EMERGENCY, TEMPORARY COALITION GOVERNMENT. SPECULATION HAS ABATED THAT OTHER GOVERNMENT ALTERNATIVES MIGHT INCLUDE OUTRIGHT REJECTION OF THE CONVENTION REPORT COUPLED WITH THE ANNOUNCEMENT THAT DIRECT RULE WOULD BE PROLONGED INDEFINITELY OR CALLING ELECTIONS TO A NEW CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION.

4. IN THE AFTERMATH OF THE 15 SECTARIAN ASSASSINATIONS THIS WEEK, WHICH SEEM ONLY TO HAVE HARDENED LOYALIST POLITICAL INTRANSIGENCE, LOCAL OPINION IS LEANING TO THE VIEW THAT THE LABOUR GOVERNMENT WILL PROPOSE AN EMERGENCY COALITION PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT WITH THE CONVENTION TO BE TRANSFORMED INTO A LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY. THE REVEREND IAN PAISLEY FOLLOWING A MEETING WITH SECRETARY OF STATE REES JAN 5 (BEFORE THE MASSACRE OF TEN PROTESTANTS) ANNOUNCED HIS "HUNCH" THAT HMG WOULD ATTEMPT REVIVAL OF THE 1973 CONSTITUTION WITH AN ASSEMBLY AND EXECUTIVE. A LONDON TIMES EDITORIAL OF JAN 7 PROPOSING ESSENTIALLY THAT (WITH DELETION OF AN IRISH DIMENSION) HAS AROUSED CONSIDERABLE INTEREST IN NORTHERN IRELAND. THE SUSPICION THAT ALL-PARTY TALKS ON SECURITY IN ULSTER (REFTEL) COULD LAUNCH A COALITION PROPOSAL PARTIALLY EXPLAINS LOYALIST RESERVATIONS ABOUT THESE TALKS.

5. CONGEN READING OF POLITICAL SITUATION TODAY IS THAT INDEFINITE CONTINUED DIRECT RULE, IF BUTTRESSED WITH CONVINCING ATTEMPTS TO HALT TERRORISM, WOULD HAVE FAVOR OF POPULACE IF NOT OR POLITICIANS. LARGEST PROTESTANT PARAMILITARY GROUP, ULSTER DEFENCE ASSOCIATION (UDA) HAS MADE IT CLEAR IT DOES NOT INTEND FOLLOW LOYALIST POLITICIANS BLINDLY AND WITHOUT UDA SUPPORT POLITICIANS ARE ULTIMATELY INEFFECTUAL IN CONFRONTATION WITH HMG. A SECOND OPTION, PROPOSAL OF AN EMERGENCY COALITION GOVERNMENT, IF PRESENTED ADROITLY COULD WORK. PROPOSAL WOULD HAVE TO BE MADE QUICKLY BEFORE SHOCK OF SECTARIAN MASSACRES UNCLASSIFIED

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SUBSIDES AND PROPOSAL WOULD HAVE TO BE OF NATURE TO ASSURE PROTESTANT MAJORITY THAT IT DOES NOT REPRESENT FIRST STEP TO UNITED IRELAND.

6. UUUC WILL HOLD CONVENTION FERMANAGH OVER NEXT WEEKEND AND ATTITUDES RANK-AND-FILE SHOULD EMERGE THERE. PROVISIONAL IRA, WHICH CLAIMS "TRUCE" STILL ALIVE BUT SHAKY MAY ELECT LAUNCH NEW OFFENSIVE THEN.

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